

**(1) LETTER FROM MR. CHAMBERLAIN TO HERR HITLER, DATED
22nd AUGUST, 1939.**

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Your Excellency will have already heard of certain measures taken by His Majesty's Government and announced in the press and on the wireless this evening. These steps have in the opinion of His Majesty's Government been rendered necessary by the military movements which have been reported from Germany, and by the fact that apparently the announcement of a German-Soviet Agreement is taken in some quarters in Berlin to indicate that intervention by Great Britain on behalf of Poland is no longer a contingency that need be reckoned with. No greater mistake could be made. Whatever may prove to be the nature of the German-Soviet Agreement, it cannot alter Great Britain's obligations to Poland which His Majesty's Government have stated in public, repeatedly and plainly, and which they are determined to fulfil. It has been alleged that if His Majesty's Government had made their position more clear in 1914 the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, His Majesty's Government are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no such tragic misunderstanding. If the case should arise they are resolved and prepared to employ without delay all the forces at their command and it is impossible to foresee the end of hostilities once engaged. It would be a dangerous illusion to think that if war once started it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured. Having thus made our position perfectly clear I wish to repeat to you my conviction that war between our two peoples would be the greatest calamity that could occur. I am certain that it is desired neither by our people nor by yours, and I cannot see that there is anything in the questions arising between Germany and Poland which could not and should not be resolved without the use of force, if only a situation of confidence could be restored to enable discussions to be carried on in an atmosphere different from that which prevails to-day. We have been, and at all times will be, ready to assist in creating conditions in which such negotiations could take place and in which it might be possible concurrently to discuss the wider problems affecting the future of international relations including matters of interest to us and to you. The difficulties in the way of any peaceful discussion in the present state of tension are, however, obvious and the longer that tension is maintained the harder will it be for reason to prevail. These difficulties, however, might be mitigated if not removed provided that there could for an initial period be a truce on both sides, and indeed on all sides to press polemics and to all incitement. If such a truce could be arranged then at the end of that period, during which steps could be taken to examine and deal with complaints made by either side as to the treatment of minorities, it is reasonable to hope that suitable conditions might have been established for direct negotiations between Germany and Poland upon the issues between them (with the aid of a neutral intermediary if both sides should think that that would be helpful). But I am bound to say that there would be slender hope of bringing such negotiations to successful issue unless it were understood beforehand that any settlement reached would when concluded be guaranteed by other Powers. His Majesty's Government would be ready if desired to make such contribution as they could to the effective operation of such guarantees. At this moment I confess I can see no other way to avoid a catastrophe that will involve Europe in war. In view of the grave consequences to humanity which may follow from the action of their rulers I trust that your Excellency will weigh with the utmost deliberation the considerations which I have put before you.

Yours sincerely,

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.